

# CREATING DIGITAL FUTURES TOGETHER: COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE NATIONAL LIBRARY AND AUSTRALIAN LIBRARIES

Roxanne Missingham, Resource Sharing Branch, National Library of Australia

## ABSTRACT

In the digital age libraries have developed new service paradigms and created services based on online resources, most often to the desktop of our customers. The National Library is focusing on its role by working with Australian libraries, to create access to electronic and print resources across the nation. This paper describes the Library's philosophy and developments in traditional services such as the National Bibliographic Database and library directories. It also describes innovative projects such as PictureAustralia and MusicAustralia. There is significant potential for collaboration in digitisation of library collections through national cooperation with special libraries and in the development on new pathways to information such as the public libraries portal.

## Introduction

Australian libraries have formed an amazingly strong network over decades to support access to resources and to create collaborate pathways to resources. Special libraries have been perhaps the most effective providers of to access to information resources for their users around the nation. Special libraries in Australia have also been great innovators – the first automated library catalogue in Australian was in a South Australian research library in the 1950s. Special library interlending networks, such as Gratisnet and the union lists of law journal holdings, were very early innovations that have been very effective in enabling access to collections. The strong spirit of collaboration demonstrated by special libraries is indeed a good reasons to “Celebrate the future” at this conference.

The contribution of special libraries through providing services to their organisations has resulted in improved research, business, health and other outcomes. The collections of special libraries contain many unique and nationally significant materials, in some ways the best in a variety of subject areas both in terms of printed and electronic resources. Keeping up with new resources continues to be a challenge, balancing budgets with increasing serial prices have been a feature of the 1990s and promises to continue for the foreseeable future. New titles (serials and monographs) need to be acquired, online journal collections subscribed to and acquisition “on demand” through interlending and document supply continues to be important. Overall, the library sector generally has experienced improvements and efficiency gains through automation of library catalogues and interlending. Obtaining ongoing efficiencies to ensure resources are available for purchasing library materials at a sufficient level to meet demand is a continuing challenge.

The National Library has provided services which assist special libraries for decades, including directories and union catalogues. From the *Annual catalogue of Australian publications* (the predecessor to the *Australian National Bibliography*) in 1937 to APAIS online full text service in 2000, the Library has created information services for Australian libraries and Australians. Over recent years the Library has moved into new fields, developing collaborative partnerships with Australian libraries to deliver online services and to provide access to information for Australians through their local libraries, be they special, state or public libraries.

## **Collaboration: a growing direction**

All Australian libraries have in common a need to develop collections and provide services for their users. The National Library has a unique role in fulfilling these roles for its users, and also provides services to assist and connect Australian libraries. Over many decades the Library has taken its services into new directions, one of the most significant has been the provision of national information infrastructure services for the Australian library sector. While the Kinetica service forms the heart of the relationship between the National Library and Australian libraries, the emergence of the Internet has enabled new services to be developed to provide connections to bibliographic records and access to resources through interlending and coverage of online material. There is great potential for the Library to work creatively with special libraries to enhance access to the rich range of information resources held by libraries throughout Australia.

The National Library recently issued a new strategic directions statement which outlines major areas for development over the next two years. It begins:

Our major undertaking in 2003–2005 will be to provide rapid and easy access to the wealth of information resources that reside in libraries and other cultural institutions and to break down barriers that work against this. Services supporting access to library information will be simplified and made more user-friendly, and will be widely promoted.

To meet this broad goal our focus includes investigation of developments to overcome the barriers to accessing the resources and service of Australian libraries. Special libraries have a key role in providing access for many Australians to resources for their research, work and study. The National Library's fundamental approach to overcoming barriers can only occur through working with Australian libraries to reach out to meet the needs for Australians. We recognise that most Australians are primarily served by their local libraries - which may be a special, public or academic library. In working with a range of libraries, the National Library can aim to create a sustainable future model for access to resources and services in the new networked environment.

### **A national infrastructure model**

For all Australian libraries, the Internet has provided the opportunity to turn visions into realities. Librarians have long desired to make information resources available to their users regardless of the location of the library or the users, with resources delivered in a form that enables easy use in the information context of the user – whether it be a lawyer writing an opinion, a medical researcher in a laboratory or a policy maker researching a particular issue. All of these users require access to quality resources from their work, and often from home, with easy support for access to collections, document delivery (rapid electronic delivery) and reference services. The opportunity for the National Library to work with special libraries to participate in the delivery of this vision offers many opportunities to us all.

Collaboration between Australian libraries has many advantages. Some of the principles which have underpinned developments include:

- awareness of the importance of accessing collections held across Australia for all our users;

- recognition of the special and unique collections held in Australian libraries, particularly special libraries;
- development of tools to increase the ability to consider issues of collection development nationally, both for groups of libraries and for all Australian libraries;
- development of service to enable users to access material wherever they need it – from the computers in their organisation, in their library or at home;
- awareness that services need to be available to assist the development of efficient practices in libraries ; and
- forward oriented focus on the development of an architecture which will support increased access to knowledge.

Digital channels have been the focus of the National Library’s collaborative services – some, such as PictureAustralia, have been in place for a number of years. The model developed to support collaboration has, in essence, a two tier approach based on collections and access mechanisms.

Access tier	National Bibliographic database (access to Australian library collections)	PictureAustralia (access to digitised images from museums, galleries and libraries)	MusicAustralia (access to digitised music)	Directories: Australian Libraries Gateway, Map collection directory, RAAM
Collection tier	PANDORA Australian digital archive (born digital resources)	CASL Consortium (purchasing for national, state and public libraries)		

The **National Bibliographic Database**, available through the **Kinetica** service, is probably the most significant partnership of Australian libraries with the National Library used by special libraries. The service aims to enable libraries to shared resources and cataloguing in a networked environment, and has continued for 22 years – reaching over 1000 Australian libraries who can access over 34 million holdings and 14 million bibliographic records, as well as 6 international databases. The service has had a far reaching effect, as noted by comments from special libraries:

“The greatest result of our move to using the Kinetica Document Delivery service has been the increased recognition by the staff of the Institute of the important role the library can play in the teaching process. There has been a shift from seeing the library as a support partner to one of being an integral part in the teaching process, from curriculum development to resource acquisition. This has been, in part, due to the ease with which Kinetica allows our ILL librarian to locate items, place requests track requests and the general faster pace of service. Previously our ILL librarian would spend hours locating, faxing and waiting for replies regarding ILL request. Now he is able to quickly sort the locations holding an item... We can now make a valuable contribution to a service network providing access to everyone.”

“When I started ... I continued the historical practices in the library for a year and experienced the difficulty of locating material through a dated source and number of library catalogues. The time-consuming practice of original cataloguing was extremely good for practicing my cataloguing skills, but frustrating when so many other aspects of the library needed attention. The increase in library catalogues on the WWW increased the range of material the library could access ... searching for holdings was simple but incredibly tedious. Kinetica has changed all that. I now check the Kinetica database only. A time-saving of many hours over the year ... By using the Kinetica database I have saved time that I have been able to use in developing access to electronic journals, I have increased the material available to the library through interlibrary loan for a cost less than purchasing Serials in Australian Libraries CD-ROM each year.”

“As the year 2000 approached, Y2K-compliance was the driving force for many a system upgrade ... We had been receiving catalogue cards from ABN, when we found Kinetica would no longer offer this option, it provided the impetus to finally automate the catalogue. We continue to regularly add holdings to Kinetica, upgrade bibliographic records and add original records ... While we have taken advantage and benefited from many of the services offered by Kinetica, we are particularly grateful for access to OCLC which was made available to small libraries who otherwise found it too expensive and too difficult to subscribe... Being able to search on OCLC and other overseas databases for copy cataloguing is a great help.”

“The Library backlog of — mainly pre-1970 — scientific technical reports totalled some 20 metres of shelving and had been lying in wait prior to 1988 and existed until 2002 ... With the Kinetica Search function and selection of RLG union catalogue database, and later OCLC WorldCat, we were able to find bibliographic records for the majority — 95 per cent — of the items ... we can now boast that we no longer have a cataloguing backlog.”

**PictureAustralia** (<http://www.pictureaustralia.org>) is a newer service, now providing access to digitised image collections from 27 contributors, including CSIRO. With over 650,000 images and 55,000 user sessions a month, many collections can now be easily accessed for research, recreation, study or other purposes. Joining PictureAustralia is easy – it is based on the concept of sharing access through contribution of files of metadata. Images are collected on the fly for searches, they do not need to be supplied for storage at the National Library. Over 90% of user sessions on PictureAustralia result in users moving through to the web sites of participants either see larger images of the pictures or to order or find further information for material identified through the searches. Contact from any library interested in joining the service would be welcomed – either to staff at PictureAustralia or at the conference trade stand.

**MusicAustralia** (<http://www.musicaustralia.org>) takes a special area of Australian material and seeks to provide access to digitised and born digital resources. This innovative project is currently in pilot stage. The service access enables Australians to find these special materials in image, text, music files, audio files and multimedia resources. We encourage all special libraries to use the site and forward any comments.

**Directories and guides** to collections held around the nation have increasingly been made available through the National Library's web site. In 2002 the *Map collections in Australian libraries: a directory* was launched, joining *Australian Libraries Gateway*, the *Register of Australian Archives and Manuscripts* and *Oral History Directory* as sources of information for libraries and Australians. Many special libraries are listed in these directories and any libraries whose collections are not yet listed should contact the National Library for information on joining relevant services.

**PANDORA**, the Australian digital archive was developed to acquire and manage born digital resources. Initiated by the Library in 1996, the archive is now a collaborative partnership with six state libraries, ScreenSound Australia and the Australian War Memorial. The collection includes a diverse range of resources, and a recent review of collection development has led to the prioritisation of the collection areas:

- Commonwealth government publications
- Publications of tertiary education institutions
- Conference proceedings
- E-journals
- Items referred by indexing and abstracting agencies (which frequently are from the first four categories but also include items with print versions)
- Sites in nominated subject areas on a rolling three year basis and sites documenting key issues of current social or political interest, such as election sites, Sydney Olympics, Bali bombing.

Pandora also works with indexing and abstracting service to provide an archive for materials they index, providing storage and persistent identifiers for this material. Further developments continue to be assessed and the concept of a national online archive may offer potential for discussion about new models with special libraries.

The **Council of Australian State Libraries (CASL) Consortium** is a group formed for the purpose of acquiring access to commercial electronic information resources. Its aim is to simplify licensing arrangements, improve cost benefits for member libraries, and to explore opportunities for making electronic product more widely available to Australians, regardless of where they live. Extensive work on licensing principles and legal issues was undertaken to establish the Consortium and details are available on the web (<http://www.caslconsortium.org/>). Discussions have been held with special libraries to share information and consider ways that the CASL Consortium and any special library consortia may work more closely together for mutual benefit.

All these services demonstrate a commitment by the Library to work collaborative with libraries across a range of sectors, to enable new innovative developments to increase access to the nation's collections for all Australians.

### **Where to from here?**

While the Library welcomes discussion with special libraries on participation in the above services, there are opportunities to discuss other ways of working together.

The Public Libraries Portal is an example of a development designed to increase access to resources, for a defined group libraries, working in partnership with the National Library. It is an innovative project aimed at enhancing access to quality information resources in Australian libraries. In particular it offers a "one stop search" to the NBD, APAIS Full text and PictureAustralia. The National Library of Australia is

collaborating with five public libraries throughout Australia to develop the Portal, Brisbane City Council, Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service, Northern Region Libraries (Moree, New South Wales), Thuringowa Library Service and Southern Tablelands Regional Library Service (Goulburn, New South Wales). It will commence in September 2003 and run as a trial project for one year. The need for direct access by libraries to the NBD emerged as a significant theme at the last Kinetica Users' Meeting in 2002, where a number of delegates expressed their desire to extend access to patrons. The Pilot takes this concept further, and also aims to better understand the needs of Australians (end users) and produce a new business model.

The Library is also working with commonwealth government libraries to improve access to online government publications. Commonwealth Government publishing is an area that has moved significantly from print to Internet as the primary publication mechanism. To provide access to these resources a pilot project has commenced to ensure contribution of data for government print and electronic documents to improve the coverage of digital government publishing. Seven government departments are participating in the pilot that will review, research, test and evaluate issues relating to the use and collection of metadata for Commonwealth Government publications. Participants included Australian Bureau of Statistics, Department of Health and Ageing, Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, Department of the Treasury, Environment Australia, Parliamentary Library and the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission.

Over the coming year the Library will continue to discuss opportunities to work collaboratively in the online environment with special libraries – so jointly we can “Celebrate the future”.

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